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ABSTRACT

Program evaluation, the evaluation of the performance of a unit of an organization (rather than of specific persons within that unit) against criteria that are consonant with the goals of other units in the organization, is currently the most important mechanism for the increased coordination, or coupling, of various hierarchical levels in the educational structure and for the increased centralization of control of schools. Examination of program evaluations in California schools over recent years reveals that while tight coupling does not yet exist between state policies and the activities of school districts and local schools, changes in certain aspects of program evaluation provide the foundation for tighter coupling. These changes include, most notably, the tendency of program evaluations to increase in importance throughout the life span of the programs evaluated. The institution of sanctioning processes, or the real or perceived threat of such processes, often urged during periods of fiscal restraint and made more practicable by the tendency toward increases in the specificity of program goals, could make tight coupling a reality in the schools. (Author/PGD)

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CENTRALIZATION AND TIGHTER COUPLING IN EDUCATION THROUGH PROGRAM EVALUATION

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CENTRALIZATION AND TIGHTER COUPLING IN EDUCATION THROUGH PROGRAM EVALUATION

Abstract

Program evaluation in schools may reduce the often-noted vertical loose coupling in American schools. Increases in external funding of local schools have led to mandated program evaluations, whose visibility leads to pressure for increased control by legislators and administrators. The following indicators of vertical coupling increased through time for evaluations of nine California programs: importance of program evaluations, frequency of program evaluations, the demand that client outcomes be measured, the specificity of mandated goals and activities, and stress on evaluation methodology. Yet program evaluations were not yet linked to sanctions for programs evaluated as poor. The changes in program evaluation in California provide necessary, but not sufficient, bases for increased state control of schools. Tight coupling will appear if sanctions, or the threat of sanctions, or perception of such a threat, are added to the foundation provided by program evaluations.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the role of program evaluation in the "coupling" or coordination of hierarchical levels in the educational structure. The concept of "loose coupling" has arisen, in part, to conceptualize the visible lack of close articulation of parts of various social systems. (Weick, 1976; March and Olsen, 1976; Meyer and Rowan 1977). The coordination, or lack of coordination, of various hierarchical levels in a social system is one result of the control processes within human institutions.

There are three major types of evaluation that can produce tight coupling between units of systems: (a) self-evaluation by occupants of a position according to internalized standards and goals that are consonant with those of other units, (b) the evaluation of performances, such as personnel evaluations that conform to criteria that are consonant with the goals of other units, and (c) program evaluation, in which the performance of a unit of an organization, rather than of specific persons within a unit, is evaluated against criteria that are consonant with the goals of other units. In this paper, we will not analyze two of these mechanisms for coupling: self-evaluation and personnel evaluation. We focus here only on program evaluation, which we believe is currently the most important mechanism for tighter coupling and increased centralization of control of schools.

In recent years there has been an increase in state and federal fund-

ing of local school districts. We believe that this shift away from local sources of funds may lead to a shift in the control structure. We will examine various aspects of program evaluation to determine the extent and nature of coupling or coordination between public schools and federal or state agencies. Some researchers have examined loose coupling in education at the societal or institutional level (Meyer and Scott, 1979) and others have assessed accountability processes at the level of the local school. (Talbert, 1979; Cohen and Miller, 1979) In our approach we seek to link directly these two perspectives by using program evaluation as a measure of centralized control at the state level of activities within local school districts.

We concentrate on the analysis of specific policy initiatives and on the program evaluations associated with them. Such specific programs are only part of the total school effort but they are increasingly important. Our data come from reports to state level policy-makers concerning changes in programs at the level of school districts and schools. We use all available material in reports at the state level for one state, California. Further research is needed to test the generalizability of our results.

Our approach rests on several assumptions. We characterize the public educational structure as a hierarchy of administrative levels in which attempts are made to control or 'couple' across levels, as well as to avoid control or 'decouple' across levels. At each level of the system, we may characterize the process of policy implementation in terms of these two characteristic modes. We assume that, in general, superiors in a hierarchical relationship are somewhat more likely to seek the controlling or 'tight coupling' mode than are subordinates, who attempt to avoid

control or 'decouple', such as at the school site.

Indeed, writings on loose coupling suggest precisely such a pattern of administrative practice. Schools, in this view, seek to insulate and buffer their activities from the requirements of higher administrative levels, maintaining the appearance of compliance while engaging in autonomous activities. The isolated classroom is frequently characterized in this way, protected from close scrutiny by the principal and yet supposedly under the principal's control. Rowan (1977) and Davis and Stackhouse (1977) both state, for example, that those policies which have the lease impact on the process of instruction are most likely to be implemented, while those policies which seek to couple the classroom and its activities tightly to higher levels of the organizational hierarchy are least likely to be enforced.

Coupling between institutional units is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon. Program evaluation may be leading to tighter coupling for some activities within the overwhelmingly decoupled system of American public schools. It is a matter of degree. Since evaluations of these programs are public information, their visibility leads to continuing pressure for increased control through program evaluations. In response to these pressures, educational officials and legislators seek greater control over the educational process and push for more frequent and improved program evaluations. Initial vague mandates from program evaluation tend to be followed by reports that the data are inadequate for assessing the usefulness of the mandated legislative program. This in turn leads to legislative and administrative changes that demand tighter control over program evaluations, with corresponding feedback of evaluation results to legislators and to state

and federal administrators. Continuing criticism of the program evaluations from within the evaluation profession adds additional momentum to coupling. By examining program evaluations over recent years, we can determine the extent to which centralized agencies are increasing the coupling of activities within local schools to central policy objectives and standards.

The Trend Towards Tighter Coupling in Schools

In recent years there appears to be a general trend in federal and state educational policies toward tighter coupling through increased progrm specificity. The broad goals for education in the 1960's gave way to the precise and more narrow goals of the 1970's. For example, at its inception the goal of Title 1, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, was to provide funds to support quality educational services for low-achieving students, without specifying means. Title 1 funds are currently used in programs that are better evaluated, more closely-defined, and more tightly administered than they previously were. This move from a loosely coupled program towards a more tightly coordinated structure was a complex one, involving many levels of the educational structure.

How did these transformations take place in fifteen years? In the first place, these educational programs were designed for loose coupling. The emergence of the broad-based educational policies of the 1964-66 era was a partial response to fundamental social issues which were outside the scope of the educational process. Indeed, many have commented on the

'structural failure' of programs designed to transform society merely through changes in the educational process. (Bowles and Gintis, 1970; Jencks, 1972; Spring, 1976). But there was more at work in the designation of such broad goals than merely an attempt at solving the insoluble by throwing money at it. Sutherland (1974) describes how such policies were designed for loose coupling as a political strategy by President Johnson. This was an attempt to reassure the states that the patterns of decentralized controls which had so long characterized American education would be continued in an era of massive educational funding by the Federal government. The rapid passage of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965, has been largely attributed to this political compromise. Indeed, in the early days of these programs, it was almost impossible to deny funds to states: evaluation of programs was minimal or lacking altogether; programs were funded on demand; outcomes of programs were unclear or unspecified; and in the few instances where program goals were clearly outlined, no attempt was made to examine outcomes. In some situations, the new federal intervention was nothing less than a wholesale underwriting of any educational strategy that states wished to undertake. For example, Title 5 of ESEA, 1965, 'did not contain categorical limitations for the implementation of specific programs. State departments of education were given the authority to identify needs and design programs to meet them.'[1] In the

[1] Sutherland, 1974, page 156

first versions of Title V, funds were to be allocated automatically to states; only in a later period were states required to specify the probable use of funds.

The new and massive funding by the federal government came at a time when most state Departments of Education were unable to adequately administer any large program. As Sutherland notes;

> "Although some state agencies in 1965 were considered well managed, most were thought to lack sufficient personnel to supervise existing state programs or the capability to assume new responsibilities needed to meet future educational needs. Although all state departments of education had professionals capable of providing consultative and technical service to local education agencies, the number of staff members available on a full-time basis was limited. Only one fifth of the states had two or more supervisors of teacher education and fifteen did not have a part-time employee for this activity. One third of the states provided no services or supervision of school libraries. Twenty-nine did not provide for the supervision of industrial arts programs and the remaining states had only a supervisor of vocational education. Four state agencies had no full-time staff members to consult with local school systems for special education and only thirteen had one or more full time consultants for the development of programs for the gifted.
>
> Persons in possession of skills and the training to conduct research, evaluate findings and test and implement new instructional programs were also needed by state education agencies. Although

> more than two thirds of the state agencies had departments that included the word research as part of the title, only 108 persons were employed for research purposes and nine state departments of education listed no research personnel."[2]

The development of the new federal initiatives brought about changes in administration at all levels of the educational hierarchy. Title 5, ESEA was in part an attempt to do just this: to provide funds for a new administrative structure, which included program specialists; for new systems of administration at the state and local level; for new units for the development of research; and for personnel for the improvement of evaluation. The initial structure of the administrative hierarchy of education, from the federal level down to the school site, had made tight coupling unlikely. The federal programs themselves thus initiated a dialectical process of growth in the administrative structure, provided an impetus to develop programs which used specialized materials and which provided measurable outcomes, and developed a system of evaluations along with the personnel to undertake those evaluations. This transformation of the structure provided the framework for a possible trend towards tight coupling.

HYPOTHESES

We believe that a reciprocal interaction among legislators, educational administrators, program evaluators, school district personnel and the concerned public has produced changes in the process of program evaluation that have

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[2]Sutherland, 1974, pages 74-76

resulted in tighter coupling. We have generated a number of hypotheses, consistent with one of the author's (1975) work on evaluation and control, to test this belief.

It is vertical tighter coupling that is being examined in this paper, the closer linkage between state policy makers and performers at the district and school level. We will examine one policy at a time. There is another form of coupling which is outside the scope of this paper: horizontal coupling between programs. For example, if contradictory criteria are used for the evaluation of two programs, there will be necessary difficulties in linking the activities under one program to activities under the other. Vertical tight coupling does not necessarily lead to horizontal tight coupling.

Our hypotheses are grouped according to their relevance to the two basic processes underlying control of programs: evaluation and sanctioning.

Hypotheses concerning evaluation:

1. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the emphasis on the importance of program evaluations.

2. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the mandated frequency of program evaluation.

3. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the mandated evaluation of client outcomes.

4. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the use of external agencies for program evaluation.

5. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the specificity of program goals.

6. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the specificity of mandated program activities.

7. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the specificity of mandated evaluation procedures.

8. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the general emphasis on methodology in program evaluation.

9. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the use of quantitative evaluation procedures.

10. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the use of specified evaluation instruments.

11. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the emphasis on appropriate sampling.

12. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the emphasis on mandated program change to reflect program evaluations.

Hypotheses concerning sanctions

13. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the specification of sanctions for performance or non-performance.

14. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the specification of the link between program evaluations and sanctions.

15. For each policy initiative there will be an increase over time in the use of sanctions by administrators and legislators to reflect the results of program evaluations.

SOURCES OF DATA

We examined all available Federal and State educational policies in California on which periodic evaluation reports were produced. We analyzed

three different data sources to test our hypotheses. First, we impressionistically looked at annual reports on five major programs in California from 1972 to 1976: the Educationally Disadvantaged Youth program, the Miller-Unruh program, the ESEA Title #1 program, the Early Childhood Education program and the Bilingual Education program. Second, we had the periodic program evaluations of the Miller-Unruh program between 1965 and 1975. Third, we contrasted the earliest and latest available program evaluation for each of 9 different programs. In addition to the first five examined, we added information from program evaluations of Vocational Education, the State Preschool Program, the Mentally Gifted Minors program, and the Bilingual Teacher Corps program.

Most evaluation reports of programs were by the California State Department of Education; less commonly they were produced by the Legislative Analyst, and infrequently by the Office of the Auditor General. Background material to provide a context for our research included secondary analyses of Federal and State policies, particularly Henry Levin's "A Decade of Federal Policies," in Haverman (1974), Federal Funding of Educational Innovations, Rand Corporation, Vol. 1-5, 1973-74; and J. L. Sutherland, Federal Grants to State Departments of Education for Administration of ESEA, 1965, 1974.

Results

We began with a gross examination of program evaluation for five major educational policies in California during the period 1972 to 1976. We found a general year-by-year increase in the emphasis placed on program evaluation. Indicators included the space and funds allotted to evaluation

during each year, the degree to which methodological questions were discussed, the extent to which improvements in evaluation were discussed, the indications that secondary 'evaluations of evaluations' would take place, and the frequency of program evaluation. Our findings were gross, simply a summary across these measures of yearly increase, or decrease, or no change. Yet the pattern is overwhelming in its support for the increasing importance of program evaluation.

Reports on the Miller-Unruh program, for example, show a systematic increase in the emphasis placed on evaluative processes. Similarly, since the program's inception in 1972, reports on ECE programs indicate persistent attempts to intensify evaluation procedures. Reports on the remaining three policies illustrate the pattern somewhat less dramatically. The Educationally Disadvantaged Youth program, for example, is evaluated more heavily by the end of the period, but the changes do not occur every year. The same pattern is repeated in ESEA Title #1 and in Bilingual Education. In all instances, the 'level of evaluation' in each of the three programs either increases or remains constant at the old levels. Of the 22 annual transitions for which we can make a judgment, 18 show annual increases in the importance of program evaluation, while four indicate no change. For three we have insufficient material in the reports. The year by year trend towards increasing importance of program evaluation appears steady across programs and across years.

To see precisely what these extensions in the evaluative process mean, we examined one program in detail over a ten year period, and Table 1 reports our results. This table shows data taken from the evaluation reports of the Miller-Unruh program, which began in the 1960's in order to combat reading

problems among primary students. Five evaluations of the program have been published, for the years 1965, 1970, 1971-72, 1973-1974, and 1975-1975. The four columns of data in Table 1 represent the four comparison periods that result from contrasting consecutive reports. Thus, for example, the first column headed "1965-1970" shows findings for each of fifteen aspects of program evaluation, obtained by comparing the 1970 report with the 1965 report. A plus indicates that a particular aspect has increased between the two reports, a minus indicates a decrease, and a zero means no change. "No data" means that the reports contained no information on that particular aspect. The sums of pluses, minuses, and zeros within a single program are

(Table 1 about here)

used to determine an overall measure of the direction of change. Such rough summation is reasonable only because there is just one minus sign in all of our results.

As shown in Table 1, the only aspect of program evaluation to show no change was the frequency of program evaluation. Four aspects increased moderately, increasing in one comparison period but not in the other three. These were specification of program activities by evaluations, specification of evaluation procedures, focusing evaluations on client outcomes, and the amount of attention given to the sampling of events evaluated. Both the specificity of program goals and the degree of quantification of evaluation procedures registered increases in two comparison periods. The emphasis on methodology in general declined in one period but increased in three, indicating overall support of this hypothesis across the entire period. The

TABLE 1

Periodic Changes in Emphasis on Nypothesized Aspects of Program Evaluation, for Five Evaluations of the Miller-Unruh Program, 1965 to 1975

Aspect of Program Evaluation	Period 1965 to 1970	1970 to 1971-73	1971-73 to 1974	1974 to 1975
1. Importance of evaluations	no data	no data	no data	no data
2. Frequency of evaluations	0	0	0	0
3. Client outcomes	0	+	0	0
4. External agencies	no data	no data	no data	no data
5. Specificity of goals	+	+	0	0
6. Specificity of activities	0	+	0	0
7. Evaluation procedures	+	0	0	0
8. Methodology	+	-	+	+
9. Quantification	+	+	0	0
10. Evaluation instruments	+	+	+	0
11. Sampling	+	0	0	0
12. Program link to evaluations	no data	no data	no data	no data
13. Sanctions specified	no data	no data	no data	no data
14. Sanctions link to evaluations	no data	no data	no data	no data
15. Sanctions used	no data	no data	no data	no data
SUM +	6	5	2	1
0	3	3	7	8
-	0	1	0	0

development of evaluation instruments increased in three of the four periods.

No data were available in the evaluation reports on: explicit discussion of the importance of evaluations, the use of external agencies for evaluation, the link between program evaluations and mandated program change, specification of sanctions for performance, the link between evaluations and sanctions, and the use of sanctions.

The sums of pluses, minuses, and zeros for all hypotheses during each comparison period show clearly that the increase in the hypothesized aspects of program evaluation took place early and tapers off through time. There may be a ceiling effect here.

To conclude, no hypothesized aspect of program evaluation decreased over the ten-year span covered by the reports. In fact, of the 36 cells created by the nine aspects over the four comparison periods, just one cell showed a decrease and 14 showed increases.

(Table 2 about here)

Table 2 reports results on nine different policies examined in terms of the hypothesized fifteen aspects of program evaluation. Our tactic was to analyze reports for the longest time period for which data were available. For the programs for which we have data, five out of nine policies indicate an increased frequency of program evaluation, and five out of nine policies increased their evaluation of client outcomes. We were interested in determining whether outside evaluation was playing an increasing role in education, and there was a minor increase in the policies we examined. The trend towards outside evaluation appeared for one out of two policies. The Legislative Analyst wrote that "We recommend that the Education Code be amended to (a)

TABLE 2

Changes in Emphasis on Hypothesized Aspects of Program Evaluation, for Nine Programs, Using Earliest and Latest Available Report

Aspect of Program Evaluation	Educational Policy Initiatives								
	Miller -Unruh	Educ. Dis. Youth	Title 1	Bi-ling Educ.	Early Child Educ.	Voc. Educ.	Pre-Schl	Ment. Gift Minor	Bi-ling. Teach Corps
1. Importance of evals.	No data	+	+	+	+	+	No data	+	No data
2. Frequency of evals.	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	+	0
3. Client outcomes	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	+
4. External agencies	No data	No data	No data	0	+	No data	No data	No data	No data
5. Specificity of goals	+	+	+	0	0	+	+	+	No data
6. Specificity of activities	+	No data	+	+	0	+	+	0	No data
7. Evaluation procedures	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	+	+
8. Methodology	0	0	0	+	+	+	—	+	+
9. Quantification	0	+	+	+	0	No data	No data	0	+
10. Evaluation instrument	0	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	+
11. Sampling	0	+	+	+	No data	No data	0	0	+
12. Program link to evals.	No data	No data	+	+	+	+	No data	No data	+
13. Sanctions specified	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
14. Sanctions link to evals.	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
15. Sanctions used	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data

Require the Department of Education to contract for and not conduct evaluations of major education programs," but there is not a current trend in this direction.[1]

Closely related to the process of evaluation is the increased emphasis on the specificity of goals for educational programs. The general line of argument has been that precise goals lead to more manageable program evaluations, and thus tighter coupling. And, indeed, six out of eight policies suggest such a trend towards more precise educational goals. Five out of seven policies show increased specification of activities which are to take place in the classroom. There is a trend towards improving general methodology of evaluation, with five increases and one decline out of nine policies. The specificity of procedures to be used when programs are evaluated also shows a strong trend (six out of nine policies), together with a continuing emphasis on improving evaluation instruments (seven out of nine). Concern with sampling increases for most policies (four out of seven). Increased quantification of the evaluation procedures (four out of seven) need not reflect a decline in qualitative approaches; generally the trend is towards more use of both qualitative and quantitative measures.

Two other trends are worth noting. The first is the increased emphasis given to the evaluative process itself in all the policies for which we have data. A second is the increasing emphasis on linking program evaluations to mandated program changes, a pattern found in all five programs for which data

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[1] Responsibility for Evaluation of State Education Programs, Legislative Analyst, Sacramento, 1977, page 4

were available.

For no program can we show an increase in the mention of explicit sanctions, in relating sanctions to poor performance as measured by program evaluations, or in discussion of the use of sanctions. Both the threat and use of sanctions on the basis of program evaluations remain rare.

Reliability

Two of the authors did a reliability test for each of the 135 cells in Table 2 produced by nine programs and fifteen hypotheses. The standard used was the most stringent one -- the two analysts after independent reading of the reports were to give exactly the same code (+, -,0, or no data). With the exception of the Preschool program, for which reliability of coding was .67, the individual programs showed agreement between coders of .80 or better. The mean reliability across all nine programs was .87.

Discussion

We have presented data that suggests an unmistakeable trend towards increasing emphasis on program evaluation in education. All of our data provide substantial support to that general thesis

The sheer frequency of program evaluation generally increases over time. Given the lack of evaluators and evaluation systems at the outset of federal and state initiatives, the number of evaluations is likely to increase merely because of the emergence of a new bureaucracy. Recommendations by both the Department of Education and by the legislative analyst commonly recommend frequent evaluations, the general trend being away from self-report towards a multi-dimensional method of evaluation, including questionnaires, onsite visiting, and tests at the school, district and state level.

As early as 1971 Miller-Unruh makes such a recommendation, and in later years such recommendations become usual.

Just as important in the trend towards tighter coupling are the qualitative changes which program evaluation undergoes. One can cite, for example, the concern with general methodology to which discussion of program evaluation frequently leads. Such discussion provides an impetus for changes in evaluation procedures and subsequent changes in educational policy.

A concern with methodology and evaluation is indicated in the 1973-1974 Miller-Unruh Reading Program report:

> "The current report focuses exclusively on the evaluation of goals concerning reading skills. There has been no testing effort to assess the goals of the Miller-Unruh Reading Specialist program which relate to interest in reading for pleasure and information, positive attitudes towards reading, and appreciation of self and others....The lack of attitudinal data in the current evaluation report is attributable to the prohibitively high cost of obtaining sufficiently reliable and valid data about the affective outcomes of basic reading programs statewide. This limitation does not express a lack of concern about the affective outcomes of reading programs. In fact, the Department is currently working with the Advisory Committee on this testing program."

There are also more specific methodological concerns. Of prime importance is the emphasis on sampling. An example of the emphasis on the need to improve this aspect of evaluation comes from the Evaluation Report of Multiple Funded Programs, 1976-1977:

"A third limitation stems from the population of schools that receive monitor and review visits each year. The schools selected are either new to the program or are those that were ranked low in overall program quality the previous year. Thus, the group reviewed could not be considered representative of all schools participating in the programs, and the ratings of these 'new' and 'low' schools are not representative of the quality of programs across participating schools."

The specificity of mandated activities and behavioral outcomes increased over time. The MGM program in 1978 was forced to write more specific legislation:

"The State Board of Education took corrective action in December 1976.... In January 1978, the Attorney General ruled that to conform (with a new provision) the State Board of Education must prescribe criteria which ensure that not more than two per cent of the pupils in each grade are identified as mentally gifted minors....In the January 1978 opinion, the Attorney General recognized the difficulty of developing a workable policy in this area and observed that 'This entire subject is a matter that deserves legislative consideration'..."

The report concludes in part:

"We recommend that the legislature redefine the State's policy for identifying "gifted' pupils...what, if any, special identification of pupils should occur in California's public schools as a

basis for providing unique opportunities to such pupils: if such special identification is warranted, what criteria should be used and what can be done to ensure that such criteria are (a) fair to pupils from a range of backgrounds having a variety of talents and achievements and (b) cost effective. In view of the complex issues related to these matters, the legislature may wish to establish a committee composed of educators, scholars and a range of other individuals to advise in this area.

The Department of Education has failed to perform adequate state level evaluations of the MGM program and to provide consistent guidelines for local evaluations...Districts are required under administrative regulations to perform annual evaluations of pupil progress and program administration for MGM programs... Although the Department requires that each participating district perform an annual evaluation of pupil progress and program administration, it has not provided systematic guidelines for district use. The district evaluations we analyzed generally contained methodological limitations and did not provide a basis for generating valid conclusions about program effectiveness... We recommend that as part of a long term strategy...the legislature designate an entity independent of the Department of Education to evaluate such programs. This independent entity could perform an overall statewide evaluation to measure the benefits of various approaches for educating gifted pupils and might also assist in establishing local evaluation guidelines."

The general thrust of this report is thus to suggest that legislative goals have been imprecise, that specificity is necessary, and that such problems of specificity should be overseen by a committee of experts.

None of these trends in legislative and administrative mandates are isolated, and are found in many educational policies. The reports quoted are, therefore, illustrative of very general concerns: an increasing emphasis, both quantitative and qualitative, on program evaluation. Such a changing focus is manifested in terms of the increased frequency of evaluation reports across the board; the increasing specificity of program goals, both at the level of program implementation and at the level of behavioral outcome; and of the increased and continuous emphasis on improvement of the methodology used in evaluation. Usually, we should add, this results in a trend toward quantification of measures, in keeping with trends in social science data. But there has been no simple movement from the primarily qualitative measures of the 1960's towards the quantitative measures of the 1970's. What appears to be most common is the introduction of <u>both</u> forms of measurement. For example, a 1977 report comments:

> The current practice of relying heavily on numerical indicators of a student achievement and program quality ratings provides information that is too limited to provide for adequate examination of the impact of funded programs at the school level. The Department is initiating action in six (qualitative) areas to build a broader, more useful information base for program evaluation and program improvement.

Perhaps the most important tendency is the beginning of a movement towards implementation of sanctions when program evaluation indicates

poor performance. In keeping with loosely structured goals, policies enacted during the 1960's were not usually linked to a system of santions. With some programs funded pro forma, with broad-based and hard-to-evaluate educational goals, there could be little sanctioning. With the trend towards increasing specificity of educational goals, both at the implementation and outcome levels, sanctioning became possible. Thus the statutes of Assembly Bill 1267 notes in its section on program effectiveness,

> 6499.234. In approving programs under this chapter, the State Board of Education shall give due consideration to the effectiveness of the program that, upon evaluation, has been shown to be of low effectiveness and which has only limited possibility of improved effectiveness.
>
> For the fiscal year 1974-1975 and each year thereafter, districts which demonstrate a high degree of program effectiveness shall continue to receive their computed entitlements. Districts which demonstrate low levels of program effectiveness may continue to receive their computed entitlements, but the Superintendant of Public Instruction shall reduce the entitlements due to such districts if he determines that such programs have limited possibilities of improved achievements.
>
> 6499.237. The Superintendant of Public Instruction shall submit annually to the Governor and to each house of the Legislature a report evaluating the programs established pursuant to this chapteer, together with his recommendations concerning whether the same should be continued in operation.

In at least one case, for a program too short-lived for our analysis, the California legislature went beyond the threat of sanctions by actually

employing sanctions based on evaluated performance. In the Guaranteed Learning Act, 1971, an act established to 'increase significantly the achievement levels in reading and mathematics of children attending the California public schools, through the use of private contractors,' the sanction was a loss of payment to any contractor who failed to improve the behavioral performance of any student for whom a contract had been signed.

Conclusion

We have found that changes in certain aspects of program evaluation provide the foundation for tighter coupling between state policies in California and activities within school districts and schools. We do not mean to imply that tight coupling currently exists for these programs we have studied. Rather, all that needs to be added is the institution of sanctioning processes, (or the threat of such sanctions, or the perception of a threat) and there would be tight coupling in the very institution that has been a model of loose coupling. Michael Kirst, Chairman of the California State Board of Education, argues that schools in the post-Proposition 13 era already operate fearful of the imposition of state sanctions. Such threat is reinforced in a period of fiscal restraint and adds to the likelihood of tighter coupling.

We take a conservative view of our findings. The changes in program evaluation in California provide necessary but not sufficient bases for increased state control of schools. Tight coupling may not already be here, but it is now, in the late 1970's, becoming a real possibility. What is happening in California as a product of federal-state interactions may be indicative of national trends.

Finally, we wish to close with a forceful statement that neither tight coupling nor loose coupling in educational institutions is *per se* superior. Loose coupling provides autonomy that can be abused by low standards in professional practice. Tight coupling provides coordination that can lead to the deterioration of education if the criteria by which programs are evaluated are negatively correlated with the educational outcomes desired by the society. The stage is set for increasing centralization in the control of schools, but this is not inherently desirable. The task is still ahead: to link program evaluation to results that reflect societal needs and not just agency imperatives.

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